

What's lost when a family-owned diner closes for good?

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Rearrange the letters to make words for different places where you can eat or drink. Which of these places do you enjoy going to and why?

1. fofeec posh
2. artsuretan
3. staf-dofolapce

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

demand

diner

exhausted

receipt

shut down

1. A _____ is a small American restaurant that sells inexpensive food.
2. A _____ is a document you get to show you have paid for something.
3. If businesses _____, they close for ever.
4. _____ is the amount of a product or a service that people want.
5. If you are _____, you are very tired.

bill

bittersweet

diner

retire

sense

6. A _____ is the amount of money you have to pay for something.
7. If something is _____, it makes you both happy and sad at the same time.
8. When people _____, they stop working because of old age.
9. A _____ is a feeling.
10. A _____ is a person who eats in a restaurant.

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12 September, 2022

- 1 It was a hot Sunday morning in June at DeDe's diner in Utah. Link Feesago finished his breakfast. "This is a tradition I wanted my sons to continue," he said. "Twice a month, we play golf and have breakfast at DeDe's café."
- 2 While Feesago waited for his receipt, DeDe Orton came over and asked him, "How was your food?" She asked everybody that, but this was the last time she asked Feesago. DeDe's was closing, and that morning was Orton's last day. When I asked Feesago where he would take his sons next time, he said: "I don't know if it's possible to replace DeDe's."
- 3 Although it was becoming more and more popular, DeDe's was joining the more than 90,000 restaurants that have shut down across the US in the past two years. In the US, restaurant sales have reduced by \$65 billion since before the pandemic. The industry lost a million workers during the pandemic.
- 4 Even before the pandemic, it was difficult to find workers, especially cooks. St George, with a population of just over 99,000, is one of the fastest-growing cities in the US. But that growth means that the demand for services has also increased. Kirk Orton, DeDe's husband, has worked almost every day for the past five years. He was already feeling exhausted. "But we couldn't stop", he said. "Bills don't take breaks."
- 5 In April, the Ortons decided to sell the diner. The decision was bittersweet. Now they could finally retire but they felt they were losing something – their idea of the American dream.
- 6 The restaurant's last day was not busy. There was a sense of loss in the air. I felt it myself; I had eaten at DeDe's once a week since I moved to St George in 2020. As soon as I enter a new city, I look for family-owned restaurants for fast, cheap, homestyle cooking. They are also where I meet people. I heard the other diners saying sadly, "We wish you weren't closing; we have no idea where to take our friends and our families." And I knew exactly what they meant. We were losing our meeting place.
- 7 "It's hard," said DeDe Orton. "I'm excited about the future, but I'm going to miss the family and friends we've made. This was more than a business for me; it was my life." By 3pm, only a few people remained. Then the "open" sign in the window went off and DeDe's diner went dark.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 12/09/2021

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer these questions about the text.

1. Where is DeDe Orton's diner?
2. How often do Link Feesago and his sons play golf and have breakfast at DeDe's diner?
3. Where will Link Feesago take his sons next time?
4. How many restaurants have shut down in the US in the past two years?
5. By how much have restaurant sales reduced since before the pandemic?
6. Which workers are especially hard to find?
7. How many people live in St George?
8. How was DeDe Orton's husband feeling?
9. When did the writer of the article move to St George?
10. What time did DeDe's diner close for the last time?

4 Key language

a. Fill the gaps in the phrases from the text using these prepositions.

by about of during over at

1. have breakfast _____ the café
2. reduced _____ \$65 billion
3. _____ the pandemic
4. just _____ 99,000
5. a sense _____ loss
6. excited _____ the future

5 Discussion

a. Answer this question.

- Which is better – eating out or eating at home? Why?

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6 In your own words

a. Open an internet search engine and find as much information as you can about the state of Utah.

- Where is it?
- Which states are next to Utah?
- What are the biggest cities in Utah?
- What is the capital city?
- What are the main industries of Utah?
- Which famous people come from Utah?

b. Report your findings to the class.